

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## The Hound of the Baskervilles

Peepolykus and Steven Canny, based on the story by Arthur Conan Doyle

Peepolykus

Theatre Royal, Winchester, and touring  
(2007)

West Yorkshire Playhouse have done it again!

A few months after launching Maria Aitkens tongue-in-cheek production of Buchans *The 39 Steps*, currently delighting full houses at Londons Criterion, the company have turned their considerable talents for the spoof genre onto Conan Doyles masterpiece of the post 19th century thriller, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. This account is no less cleverly directed by Orla OLoughlin.

Moreover, as if to cock a theatrical snook at their colleagues who pulled off John Buchans highly populated adventure with only four players, they are rocking the house into laughter with a cast of just three.

To be honest, there are five in *The Steps* if you include the dummy and, likewise, there are four in *Baskervilles* if you count a similar device here.

The fact remains that the entire text of Steven Cannys adaptation is delivered by three players: John Nicholson, Jason Thorpe and the Spanish actor Javier Marzan who assumes, of all roles, that of Sherlock Holmes himself. It is a tribute to Señor Marzons histrionic flair that he not only gets away with it but clearly wins the hearts of his English audiences in doing so.

Except, that is, the heart of this writer who, while full of admiration for his performance, does find the thickness of his accent a tad distracting in the circumstances. What Basil Rathbone, let alone Jeremy Brett or Peter Cushing would make of Homes in this strange tongue, heaven only knows... well, like Holmes himself of course, they are all dead!

Orla OLoughlins direction is notable for its elusiveness. There are moments when the company seem to take over the production, interrupting to object to a note, unbelievably from a member of the audience. Which prompts them to begin the entire performance again!

Again, as in *The Steps*, much credit is due to the design and sound team. Where would such imaginative theatre be without horses, railways and above all, mist?

Clearly there is a movement afoot here. John Buchan and Conan Doyle cannot be the end of it.

How long before we are treated to a full-length revival of *Brief Encounter*?

*"The Hound of the Baskervilles"* is at Watford Palace Theatre from Tues 6th Sat 10 March and at Oxford Playhouse from Tues 23th Sat 17th March.

J D Akinson reviewed this production at the [West Yorkshire Playhouse](#) and Philip Fisher reviewed it at the West End's [Duchess Theatre](#)

Reviewer: [Kevin Catchpole](#)